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THE SCHAPIROS

A Page of Jewish History

BY ZVI HIRSCH RUBINSTEIN



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Translated by David Berger

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FOREWORD

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The sponsor of these papers has humbly collected them and had them translated, in order to preserve for posterity, and particularly for his friends and the members of his family, this record of the deeds and accomplishments of the Schapiros throughout all ages. These pages tell the story of the outstanding men and women bearing the name of Schapiro (and of its variants), who distinguished themselves in the fields of Jewish law and learning, public service, science, literature, philosophy and religion.

The six articles here collected and translated, originally appeared in Yiddish in the pages of the newspaper "The Day". They were written by the well-known Jewish journalist Zvi Hirsch Rubinstein and appeared serially from June 28th through August 2nd, 1921.

Allowing for minor changes involving references to time intervals, the translation reproduces the originals faithfully. To these articles the sponsor has appended four smaller items (in translation), which also appeared in Yiddish newspapers. These clippings deal with contemporary men bearing the name of Schapiro.

NATHAN SCHAPIRO

Mamaroneck, New York

Winter 1949-1950



Nathan Schapiro

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THE SCHAPIROS
A Page of Jewish History

The Schapiros are a family of Jewish descent, and their history is a page of Jewish history. They are a family of Jewish descent, and their history is a page of Jewish history. They are a family of Jewish descent, and their history is a page of Jewish history.

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I

THE SCHAPIROS
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THE SCHAPIROS
A PAGE OF JEWISH HISTORY



*I*n an old cemetery of a small German town may be seen thirteen gravestones. Corroded and misshapen slabs of stone, worn away by rain and storm; still they carry on their obstinate struggle against Father Time who has been working for nigh nine hundred years to annihilate them—but in vain . . .

And beneath these stones lies the dust of thirteen great Jews, sacred souls, who, with a smile on their lips offered their lives for their religion and their people.

At one time this cemetery had been much larger and the graves of the Jewish martyrs extended for many a mile; but, evidently, there was a scarcity of space for the living and the powers that be took over the cemetery and erected thereon barracks for their soldiers. There remained only these thirteen old monuments of a difficult and terrible era, an epoch of the absolute rule of force, of massacres and persecutions, of Christian hatred and Jewish martyrdom.

But who can fathom the depth of Jewish suffering? Have not the Jews in Germany and other countries suffered as much as those of Spain?

In the Middle Ages every ruler prided himself

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on the same "high ideals": to suppress, to exterminate and to wipe from the face of the earth all the children of Israel. The fact that they were unsuccessful only proves how much greater than their power of destruction was our urge to live—if that were possible; and to die, if it were necessary, for our people and for our God.

Are you seeking for the romance of Jewish martyrdom? Then read the story of the Jewish martyrs in the small German town of Speyer (in Hebrew "Shpiro"), where thirteen broken-down tombstones still remain as a memorial to that grand epoch; read it in the "Rabbis of Speyer", who were not only the teachers but also the heroes of their time.

Speyer is a small town in Bavaria, Germany, and has been known as a Jewish community since the first half of the 11th century. Bishop Rüdiger who at the time ruled over that district, admitted several Jewish families and assigned to them a special ghetto situated on a hillside outside the town proper. He allowed them to engage in the trade and exchange of gold and silver and gave them a small plot of land to be used as a burial ground. For these privileges the Jews had to pay a tax towards the maintenance of the Christian churches of Speyer.

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When the district later came under the rule of Henry III, the Jews were granted even greater privileges. Henry was particularly friendly to two Jewish brothers, Rabbis Kalonymus and Jékuthiel, who had emigrated there from the city of Lucca in Italy. Rabbi Kalonymus had once remarked to Henry III that the dome of the cathedral of Speyer was as magnificent as that of the Temple of Jerusalem. This pleased the King very much and he granted even greater privileges to the Jews. For instance, he would mete out severe punishment to Christians for forcing baptism upon a Jewish child and for injuries committed against Jews he directed that the eyes of the guilty person be gouged out and his right hand cut off.

The trouble, however, was that the guilty persons could not be apprehended and they would not heed the orders and decrees of the authorities. Day in, day out, the Jews suffered cruelties and persecutions at the hands of their Christian neighbors and they always felt the hatred of the Church.

Filled with ecclesiastical bigotry and supported by the traditions of the Crusades, the Christian mobs invented all sorts of false accusations against the Jews and then proceeded to carry out their own verdict.

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On May 3rd, 1096, ten Jews were slaughtered in Speyer in the most shameful manner; the eleventh victim was a Jewish woman who cut her own throat. The other Jews were wounded, their houses plundered and burned down.

In the historical chronicles dealing with the Jews of Speyer are recorded the names of the ten martyrs. Memorial prayers are offered to them in some Jewish synagogues on all holidays to this very day. The ten martyrs were: R. R. Jehuda ha-Kohen, his wife Hannah, their son Moses ha-Kohen, R. Jehuda ben Meshullam, Meshullam ben David, Sabbathai ben Kalonymus, R. Jehudah Hazakan (the Elder), his son Michael, his daughter Yehudis and the wife of R. Samuel ben Benjamin. Nine of these ten had almost given up and were about to receive the Cross in order to save their lives; but then the fires of divine wrath lit up the eyes of the last one, R. Jehudah Hazakkan. In a thunderous voice he called out to them to stand up for their faith and they all sacrificed their lives . . .

Sarah, the wife of Sabbathai ben Kalonymus, one of the ten victims, not knowing the fate of her husband, decided, contrary to the warning of all the others who were in hiding, to go out into the street to look for her husband in order to save him. Holding a knife in her hand she ran wildly

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through the streets of Speyer. After many hours of search she found her husband at last. He was dead, lying stretched out at the threshold of a Church. A white foam covered her lips and anguish shone through her eyes. With body erect and head uplifted, she uttered her last words of love to her husband, then thrust the sharp knife through her neck . . .

Among the martyrs of Speyer is recorded the name of a woman, Minna, who met her death for her faith, during a pogrom in the year 1146 in which not only the rabble participated but also members of the clergy, headed by Bishop Gunther. They demanded the baptism of every Jew and whoever refused to accept the Cross was punished with death.

In their wild chase to save infidel souls, the clergy proposed the baptism of the above-mentioned Minna. Given the choice, she selected death. But her death was even more horrible than that of the other victims. For her obstinacy in refusing to accept baptism, they pulled out her tongue and then cut off her ears. They inflicted every form of cruelty on her until she breathed her last.

Still worse were the excesses which took place

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in the year 1195. In a village the dead body of a Christian girl was found and, of course, the Jews were accused of responsibility for the murder. The ruler at the time was Bishop Otto and he directed the manner of meting out the punishment. At his behest the corpse of the daughter of R. Isaac bar Asher ha-Levi, rabbi of Speyer, was disinterred and hung up on a pole in the market place. To make the spectacle even livelier the mob fastened a live mouse to the dead girl's hair and then celebrated this desecration for two solid days. Only by paying a large sum of money did the Jews succeed in redeeming the body and re-interring it. But all this was not enough to satiate the bloodthirsty mob. For on the following day the Rabbi himself as well as eight other Jews were murdered. At the same time all the Holy Scrolls were removed from the synagogues and thrown into the river. The houses of worship were then burned down. Thus was Christian conscience appeased.

In the year 1263 the fourth slaughter occurred and in the year 1282 the fifth. The sixth massacre which took place in 1343 was as cruel as the other ones. In that year the Jews of Speyer experienced a taste of the Spanish Inquisition. A large number of them were tortured and burned at the stake. Many were hung in the streets and their bodies speared and carried about in the market place like banners. Why? Because the body of another Chris-

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tian boy was found somewhere. As this occurred during the Passover week, the Jews were accused of having murdered him in order to use his blood for ritual purposes.

There followed the period of the "Black Death" (1348). All of Western and Central Europe was afflicted with the plague, which lasted for two years. People died by the thousands and the plague destroyed almost half of Europe. The Jews of Speyer were blamed for the plague which wrought havoc in that district. It was charged that they had poisoned the wells and rivers. On January 22, 1349, nearly all the Jews of Speyer were burned alive. They were locked up in their homes which were then set afire. Their charred bodies were thrown onto the streets where they were left for a time until the mob relented. It was then decided to pack them into empty wine casks and to throw them into the river.

The "Black Death" period ended, but not the woes of the Jews of Speyer. The few remaining Jewish families were expelled from the city and were not allowed to return until twenty years later under such restrictions that it was almost impossible for them to remain.

All male Jews over five were required to wear a yellow cloth badge as a mark of distinction and

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all Jewesses over that same age a blue-striped kerchief, for the same reason. Jews were not allowed to participate in public gatherings and could not hire any Christian servants; nor might they have schools of their own. They could not live outside of the limits of the ghetto and on all Christian holidays they were forbidden to appear in the streets.

So lived the first Schapiros — the Jews of the city of Speyer. In the ranks of Jewish martyrs, the Schapiros assume an eminent place. They poured out their life-blood like water. They paid with their lives for the Christian “brotherhood of man”. But despite all the tortures and sufferings inflicted on them, there arose in Speyer eminent Jewish scholars, great Rabbis, poets and thinkers and men learned in the Law. The codes of law which they created have remained in force to this very day. Great was their spiritual and creative force and all the cruelties of even the bitterest of Jew-baiters could not destroy it.

The grandchildren of these early Schapiros have since dwelt in all the lands of the Diaspora and like their forefathers, they have played their part in the Jewish people’s struggle for existence. A few have weakened and have gone over to the camp of their persecutors. But what role can be played by a few weaklings in a nation which

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possesses the spiritual strength of the Jews of Speyer?

Our enemies were too weak: the spirit cannot be crushed, even when the whole world of Christendom stands united against us. We are the symbol of the thornbush which ever burns but is never consumed . . .

II

THE SCHAPIROS

*A Great Family of Rabbis, Savants and Illuminati
in the Darkness of the Galuth*

THE SCHAPIROS

A GREAT FAMILY OF RABBIS, SAVANTS AND ILLUMINATI IN THE DARKNESS OF THE GALUTH

Who can describe the greatness of the Jewry of yore? Who is able to relate their superhuman courage, their steadfastness, their strong belief and their readiness to sacrifice their lives for their religion!

What strength of will, what magnificent courage to bear the most horrible cruelties and tortures of the mediaeval henchmen; to bear up under the most terrifying, maleficent deeds of the bloodthirsty bands of the crusaders; the moral strength to reject the Cross when by accepting it they could save their lives!

In the historical chronicles one may read these unbelievable accounts: During the period of the Jewish massacres in the city of Speyer and other cities on the Rhine, a Jewish dignitary bearing the name of Samuel ben Yechiel, stood up in the middle of the river; took out a slaughter knife and uttered the benediction "Al Mitzvah Shechitah"; then he cut the neck of his young son. The latter, on the point of death, was still able to repeat, Amen, and then his body sank to the bottom of the river. His father then handed the knife to the synagogue sexton and commanded him to do away with him in the same manner. This was done.

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A number of Jewish men and women, among them several with suckling babes, looked on at this horrible scene. Then they, too, threw themselves into the river and were drowned, crying out as they did so: "Hear O Israel".

Such was the spiritual strength of the Jews of yore, such the heroism which suffused their souls. They gave away their lives with a beauty and a grandeur of spirit for the glorification and eternal preservation of the Jewish ethos.

Their lives, their deaths is our glory and our heritage. Those Jews of the city of Speyer (Shpiro in Hebrew) who managed to save themselves in spite of all the pogroms perpetrated against them, went forth into the wide world to find a place affording greater security. They settled in many places including Bohemia, Austria and Poland; some, however, remained in Germany, but as far removed from Speyer as they possibly could.

The Jews of Speyer brought forth great personalities. This city, so fatal to Jews, gave to Jewry outstanding savants. And wherever the Jews of Speyer emigrated their leaders carried the torch of enlightenment, raised up the Jewish masses, taught them and instilled new enthusiasm into their sorrowful and bitter souls.

One of these who emigrated from the city of Speyer was later to become the celebrated Judah the Pious, who settled in the city of Regensburg. During that period, too, the Jewish spirit was low and depressed on account of the upheavals and the many persecutions. A great need was felt to bolster up the moral and the religious spirit of the Jewish masses. The Jewish soul could not find satisfaction in the dry scholasticism of the Talmud. Another kind of force was necessary in order to enable them to suffer all the trials and tribulations.

But in what particular form would and could that force manifest itself? It was then that Judah the Pious came upon the scene. He was able to penetrate into the depths and recesses of the Jewish psyche. He reflected the popular beliefs and sensed all the delicate throbbings of the people's travail.

Rabbi Judah the Pious was the grandson of Rabbi Kalonymos of Speyer; his father bore the name of the Pious One of Speyer. Legend relates regarding Rabbi Judah that up to the age of 18 he was ignorant and illiterate; he could not even read the prayer book. But as soon as he reached the age of 18 he saw the light as if in a flash, and the young man performed miracles. The story continues that on the first Passover night, while at

prayers in the synagogue, he suddenly perceived a man with a long, flowing beard. He was very much impressed by this old man and so he asked him to be his guest for the Passover Seder. The man accepted this invitation with glee and celebrated the Seder with him. Later on, Rabbi Judah found out the secret of the old man's identity: for his guest was none other than Elijah the Prophet himself, who endowed him with great wisdom and with the power to work miracles. Soon after that Seder night Rabbi Judah saved a Jewish boy from apostasy and on many occasions he helped Jews in need.

Rabbi Judah was a deeply religious man. His moral purity, and sanctity of life won for him the name of the Pious (Hasid). He was renowned for his great wisdom, his logical mind, for the depth of his thought and for his sense of justice for all mankind.

Rabbi Judah was the author of the "Book of the Pious", which reflected his religious morality, his clarity and his nobility. His considerations regarding the relationship between man and his fellowmen show a great love for humanity that none of the moralists before or after him were able to achieve. But he demanded strictness in the duties of man to his God. Man must stand in awe and trepidation before God and the Syna-

gogue. One must fear the Lord, but the observance of fasts is not required; one must not torture the body for this constituted a hindrance to daily work, and man was created for work. If the worshipper does not understand the Hebrew of the prayerbook, it were better that he pray to God in a language which he understands. When the heart is ignorant of what the lips are reading, then the prayer becomes meaningless.

The "Book of the Pious" is also filled with gruesome stories of evil spirits, (sheidim, ruchoth and mazikim). Here we first come across the legend of the resurrection of the dead from their graves at midnight, in order to gather in the synagogue for prayers. Among the dead are to be seen also the figures of those among the living whom fate has chosen soon to die. This book also mentions that when a man does not perceive the shadow of his head on the night of Rosh Hashanah (New Year's), it was an omen that he has been selected to die during the ensuing year.

Rabbi Judah is said also to have been the author of the "Shir Ha-Jakhud", but this is not quite a certainty. Some ascribe to him the prayer "Yichbah Dimati" and the prayer "Eskarah Yom Mothi". There are other historians, on the other hand, who are of the opinion that he was not even the author of the "Book of the Pious"; but that his

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father wrote the first twenty-six chapters of that famous work.

All historical writers recognize, however, that Judah the Pious was a great poet, an excellent moralizer, and a holy man and that he had a great and beneficial influence on the Jewish masses.

The human chain of the Schapiros weaves on, beyond the confines of Germany. Many assumed an additional name and so gave rise to the combined name of Frankel-Schapiro, Wiener-Schapiro, and Parness-Schapiro; but they are really the same Schapiros, originating in the German town of Speyer.

On the Jewish cemetery of Prague we may note the graves of many Schapiros; they were rabbis, savants and leaders of their people. During the Middle Ages the Schapiros of Prague held the highest posts in the Jewish community. There was Rabbi Yehiel Schapiro, a great savant and scientist. When the great Maharal died and later, after the death of the Shela Hakadosh, both positions were offered to Rabbi Schapiro. The latter, however, was too humble to accept such eminent posts.

In Prague, also, lived Rabbi Aaron Simeon Schapiro, who had been successively rabbi in the

cities of Frankfurt, Lemberg, Brest-Litovsk, Lublin and Krakow. Subsequently he held the position of rabbi in Prague for forty years. He was renowned for his piety and austerity. Throughout his life he partook of very little food and was given very little to sleep: he only studied and studied. The charms of this world were not for him and he would have none of its sinful pleasures.

A dispute once broke out between him and the famous and learned Rabbi Shebbatai Cohen (Shach) regarding the question of the use of ethrogim (citrons). Later Rabbi Cohen conceded that Rabbi Schapiro was right and he sent his son to ask forgiveness for having been drawn into the dispute against him.

In the Prague cemetery one may see also the tombstone of one, Miriam Schapiro, the daughter of Rabbi Solomon Schapiro. She was a great student of the Talmud and a renowned figure in Jewish scholastic literature. She had attended Cheder (religious school) together with boys but during the sessions at school her face was covered with a veil. Her fellow students envied her genial mind and quick apperception even when the most abstruse passages of the Talmud were involved.

One of the greatest of Cabbalists was Rabbi Nathan Schapiro, preacher and Head of the

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Yeshivah of Krakow. He was also known under the name of "Megaleh Amakoth", after the name of the book which he wrote. The book contains a long list of abbreviations and incomprehensible symbols, from which some have deduced that Moses had prayed for the coming of two Messiahs, Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David. Still others tend to the interpretation that Rabbi Schapiro had proven that Moses wanted to confute the power of evil (Koah Hatumah) and had asked God forgiveness for all sins Jews were still to commit through the coming ages.

During his lifetime (1585 - 1633), Nathan Schapiro played a leading role among Jewish savants. He had a large number of denigrators but also many followers.

But the history of the Schapiros does not end with the Middle Ages. Their fame goes farther and the Schapiros have lived and worked throughout the centuries. The martyred blood running through their veins from the days of Speyer stirs them to great deeds. They enhance and glorify Jewish life throughout the generations.

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III

THE SCHAPIROS OF SLAVITA

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THE HISTORY OF THE

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The Jewish writer Peretz tells the following story. A Jewish soul once appeared before the Heavenly Seat for judgment. As was their wont, the Sanegor and the Kategor (the defending and prosecuting angels) in the pursuit of their offices, began to recount what the soul had accomplished during its sojourn on this sinful earth. The Sanegor placed the good deeds on one scale, one deed after the other; while on the other scale the Kategor heaped up the evil doings of the soul. The two scales rise and fall, the pointer moving first to the right and then again to the left, until it came to a sudden stop: there was no more to be said: everything was concluded. Then the Clerk of the Heavenly Court of Justice appeared on the scene to take stock of the situation and he perceived this strange sight: the pointer of the scale was in the very center and did not swerve either to the right or to the left.

The presiding Justice, after long consideration, decreed that in view of the fact that the good deeds did not outweigh the bad ones and the bad deeds did not exceed the good ones, the soul deserved neither Paradise nor Hell, but must wander about without finding any rest.

At this decree the soul uttered a bitter cry of anguish and begged for the direst punishment rather than to be banished into Limbo where there

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was nothing; for that was the worse punishment of all. The Clerk of the Court was moved by pity for the soul and gave it the following advice: "You must go forth and hover between Heaven and Earth, between Paradise and Hell, between Love and Hatred, between Tears and Blood, between Cradle and Grave; and you must be on the lookout and bring back three beautiful presents for the saints (Tzadikim); if you do so they will perhaps intercede for you and implore God to have you received in Paradise."

It took many thousands of years for the soul to find the first two presents; but to find the third gift required even longer and greater efforts. This was the most beautiful of the three gifts: it was a scullcap dipped in martyrs' blood; it represented excruciating pain and torture and whiplashes rained down over the naked body of an innocent Jew . . .

This wondrous folktale by Peretz is merely the fictional treatment of an event which really took place some one hundred and ten years ago in the small town of Slavita where a worthy Jewish family bearing the name of Schapiro lived and suffered—a name made famous by Jews throughout the entire world.

R. Moishe Schapiro was the founder of the

famous printing and publishing house of Slavita. He was the son of the great holy man, R. Pinchas Koritzer. However, instead of choosing the office of rabbi, R. Moishe elected the craft of cutting, engraving and printing Hebrew letters. Although he was called the rabbi of Slavita he would not accept any pidyonoth or kvitlach (fees and emoluments of Hassidic rabbis) but gave himself up entirely to his occupation. Some one hundred and forty years ago R. Moishe began to print a new edition of the Talmud (Shas). That edition was in such great demand that it was soon out of print . . .

R. Moishe began to amass riches and some years later he decided to print another edition of the "Shas". Again a large number of copies were sold and this edition, too, was soon out of print; this edition brought in more riches. It was then that a dispute broke out between the Slavita publishers and the Romm publishers in Vilna. The greatest rabbis of the period were drawn into the bitter quarrel, but the dispute finally ended in the defeat of the Slavita publisher.

When R. Moishe grew older his two sons, R. Pineas and R. Shmuel Abba, took over the management of the publishing business. They decided to print a third edition of the "Shas" (Talmud) but managed to bring it only up to the tractate of

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“Psachim”. For here begins the story of their tragic lives . . . They were arrested and were destined to suffer the most cruel dishonors and punishments . . .

That period saw the widespread development of the Hassidic (pietist) movement. The first proponents of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) began an overwhelming and destructive struggle against that movement. The Slavita printers had just published the “Praises and Deeds of the Baal Shem Tov”, but they refused to print any secular, let alone “critical” works. The Schapiro brothers were indicted by the Russian Government on the charge that they were printing books tending to spread obscurantism among the Jewish masses and interfering in the work of spreading culture and enlightenment.

An incident which took place at that time tended to make matters even worse. A bookbinder employed at the Slavita publishers’ committed suicide and the enemies of the latter invented a libel against the Schapiro brothers, “proving” that it was they who had murdered the bookbinder. A lawsuit followed; the enemy won and Slavita lost out.

The brothers Schapiro were imprisoned for three years and afterwards a new decree was issued

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against them. "Stroy" was a truly refined and inhuman form of punishment then prevailing in Russia. The condemned was forced to run the gauntlet of two rows of soldiers provided with cat-o'-nine-tails. The whips would come down on the naked body of the unfortunate one with full might. If you bore up under the punishment, you were lucky and were sent to Siberia . . . If you succumbed, Siberia was dispensed with . . .

Such a decree, then, was issued against the two brothers Schapiro and the date of its execution was set for the eve of the month of Elul of the year 5,599 (our 1839). It is a Friday morning and after a sleepless night the two brothers prepare themselves to receive the awful punishment, perhaps even death. Shmuel Abba reads the relative portion of the Scriptures in his cell, while Pinehas drapes the "talith" (praying shawl) about him and says his prayers quietly, with feeling and with a plaintive, tearful singsong. The dawn is rising, the first rays of the sun steal into the cell through the prison bars and fill it with the misty grayness characteristic of early fall mornings in Russia. The bells of a monastery may be heard from far off and this sound makes the feeling of oppression even deeper, bringing tears to the weak eyes, the tears streaming down the wan cheeks and are then lost in the wizened beards. The sound of the bells grow louder and the fear and awe

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increase. But before the eyes of these two, in their misty-grey cells, appears the form of martyrs, of the tortured Jewish saints of all ages and all countries: Spain, Worms, Speyer, Mayence . . . what is more beautiful than to die for one's faith, for the Sanctification of the Name (Kiddush Hashem) . . .

The key is turned in the cell lock, the door is opened up and the procurator and several police officers appear before them.

"Are you ready?"

"Ready".

And they are off. Many thousand had come to view the spectacle, but among them there was only one Jew, who had taken courage and acceded to the plea of the two brothers to witness the scene. For, after all, this was "Stroy" and it would be only proper to have a Jew present in case of need for Jewish burial . . .

The Procurator gives the signal, the act of indictment is again read; the brothers decide which one of them shall be the first to run the gauntlet; the older of the two agrees that it shall be the younger one.

The mob is restless but they will not have to wait a long time. Two of the soldiers walk over

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to R. Pinehas, undress him and he remains only in his undershirt. All is quiet for a little while and the mob of a thousand people hold their breath. The shirt on R. Pinehas' back is ripped in two, his hands are tied up in back; one of the soldiers walks in front and leads to the "Stroy".

One whiplash after the other; the straight and erect back of R. Pinehas absorbs the shock of the whip, but his face only beams and radiates. Of a sudden R. Pinehas stops in the middle of the gauntlet! The soldier drags him but he does not budge; the cat o'nine tails whirls about his body and his blood spurts forth as from a fountain. R. Pinehas still would not budge. One of the soldiers had apparently struck too high, hitting the scullcap and causing it to fall from his head. But a pious Jew will not go about without his scullcap on. He wants to bend down to pick it up from the ground but his hands are tied in back. And so the whiplashes come raining down on his body but he still stands there, adamant. His lips mumble something and at last the soldier understands what the trouble is. He picks up the skullcap and puts it on the Jew's head.

Only then does Pinehas proceed through the gauntlet, proud and serene, wearing the skullcap on his head as befits a pious Jew. He can no longer hear his brother's words of encouragement

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and triumph. He is forthwith led off to the hospital.

R. Shmuel Abba found it much easier to bear up under the lashes. No tears from him, no sobbing. Perhaps he did not even think of the pangs of the body; perhaps he was considering his brother's greatness. He suffered the 1500 lashes; and in the evening he was brought back into the prison to make the preparations for the Sabbath, as he was wont to do every Friday evening.

No one in the town of Slavita was aware of these events, but later, when the news came to be known, there was general crying and wailing. Then another decree was proclaimed to send the old Rabbi Moishe to Siberia. But the old rabbi of Slavita only laughed at this Imperial decree and when the henchmen came to fetch him candles were already burning at his bedside: he was dead.

The two brothers Schapiro spent about twenty years in Siberian prisons and were finally freed through "diplomatic" intervention (Shtadlanuth). They had become quite old by then and freedom no longer meant much to them. But the people of Slavita rejoiced and were jubilant. They prepared a grand reception for them. The whole town came to meet and greet them and the celebration lasted many months.

Thus lived and thus suffered the Schapiros of Slavita, the true Schapiros.

IV

SCHAPIROS - APOSTATES

SCHAPIROS - APOSTATES

Among the hundreds of the outstanding Jewish personalities which the Schapiros have given to Jewry there are some who have forsaken us, gone off on the right road, seeking strange gods. The reasons for this have been various. At times it was in order to create an impression on Gentiles; sometimes it was for the sake of a Gentile wife and quite frequently for economic reasons; but only very rarely was it for the sake of the new god.

Of course, the Jew would convince the Gentiles that he was truly changing his religion for the new God, whom he had at last found and whom he was ready to serve with body and soul. But these Jews only fooled the Christians and the latter believed them.

Jewry did not lose very much as a result of such defections. When dry, withered leaves fall off a tree, the tree becomes healthier and sturdier. When some members leave us we do not miss them. Our calculations are different. We do not count souls, we measure feelings. Quantity is their criterion; we stress only quality. Christianity is interested in dissemination, expansion; Judaism, in intensification.

Moreover, we take the stand that what falls off is offal. So we do not begrudge Jesus his converts. Let him relish honor and glory in his old

age. The Nineteenth Century was a period of triumph for Christianity. Many Jews in both Western and Eastern Europe became apostates from Judaism and went over to the Christian faith. Here and there, in the stream of this movement would be carried along a few Jews who were of some importance and whose apostasy caused regret in narrow Jewish circles. The majority of converted Jews, however, were worth no more than the baptismal water with which they were initiated into their new faith; and surely not worth the metal of the large crosses which they sported on their necks to demonstrate their Christianity.

A Polish Jew bearing the name of M. V. Schapiro not only succeeded in fooling Christians by making them believe that he belonged to Jesus, but they credited him with many other things, too. It took them a long time to realize that this Schapiro was an impostor and a forger, but at last they did find him out with the aid of another Jew. Schapiro became an apostate from Judaism while still a very young man, but instead of remaining in Poland and reaping the fruits and the privileges of the Christian circles, he left for Palestine in order to engage in business. There he negotiated deals with the Prussian Government, the British Museum of Art and with many members of the nobility the world over.

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Schapiro dealt in antiques. To the Prussian Government he sold pottery found in the region of Moab. He received twenty thousand dollars for these, but it was later discovered that these vessels had been manufactured in an Arab village factory. This forgery created a great sensation. The Prussian Landtag was forced to take up the whole matter and it was decided to throw out the vessels and to ask for the return of the moneys paid out. The first part of the resolution was easily carried out but not so the second, for where was Schapiro to get all this money?

Schapiro had great powers of persuasion. He had the knack of getting into the good graces of the most prominent people and he had a way of gaining their confidence and securing what he wanted of them. They had faith in him. In the year 1883 he placed before Sir Walter Besant a document purportedly of great antiquity and of extreme importance from the theological viewpoint. It supposedly contained fragments of the book of "Exodus", in which Moses is said to have made some strange utterances to the Jews. These documents were written on parchment which a Bedouin is said to have found in a pit in the region of Moab. These documents were very seriously regarded and the British were about to pay Schapiro one million pound sterling for them. However, the writing on the manuscript was too fresh and suspicion was aroused. An investigation

was undertaken and after several months it was found that Schapiro had forged them. Later he confessed to the crime of forgery. His defense, however, was that he had perpetrated the fraud in order to further the interests of Christianity and to prove to the world that the Old Testament was pure invention.

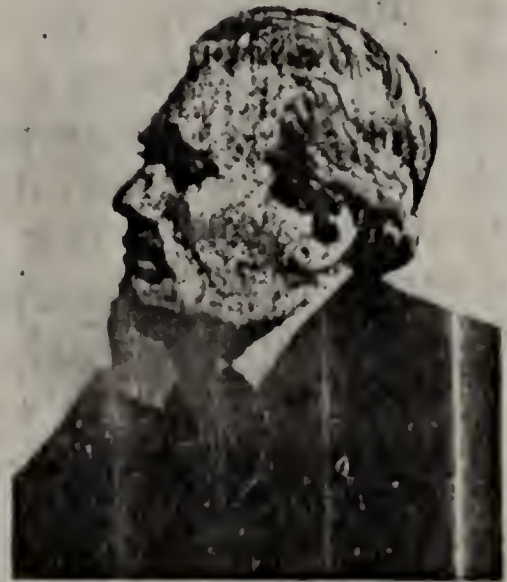
Subsequently Schapiro went to Rotterdam and it was there that he committed suicide, out of chagrin that he could not serve Christianity . . . And Christianity suffered a great loss . . .

Not all the roads leading to Christianity are covered with roses and not every Jewish convert to Christianity reaps the benefits of his new faith. At times the new marriage is not a happy one and lacks domestic bliss; but how can one expose one's weakness to the public eye and recant? So, one continues to live with one's spouse to the bitter end. But he feels nevertheless that the burden has been a very onerous one and that it had been all in vain. And one begins to search one's soul: what was the purpose of it all, what has been achieved? Was it worth while to have been persecuted by the Jews who always pointed an accusing finger at you saying: "There goes the apostate". And at the same time to be excoriated even more by the Gentiles who shouted after you: "There goes the Jew".

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A soul wrangled in the realm between Jew and Gentile, a noble, sensitive and poetical soul, sought for salvation and did not find it. The bitterness and the soul-searching of such a Jewish heart seeking for liberation in the bosom of Christianity, have been expressed in a number of Hebrew poems, written by Kalman Abba (Constantin) Schapiro. This poet had been unable to bear up under the heavy burden of his fanatical Jewish environment. Later he came to the realization that Christian fanaticism and intolerance were even more sinister, and what was even worse, it was alien to him. To suffer for a strange god is a double penalty. His apostles flay you alive, poison your blood, consume your spirit and desecrate your holy of holies.

Like so many other illuminati of that period, Kalman Abba Schapiro suffered a great deal at the hands of his pious parents. They began to persecute him the moment they caught him reading one of the "forbidden" books. He was forced to leave his native city of Grodno and to go to St. Petersburg, where



KALMAN ABBA (CONSTANTIN)
SCHAPIRO: APOSTATE HEBREW
POET.

he became a student at the Art Academy. Later he became a photographer, writing Hebrew poetry at the same time. His first poem, "Mi-Hezionoth Bath Ammi" (Visions of My People) caused a great sensation and he was soon recognized as a great Hebrew poet. His subsequent poems, "Shirei Yeshurun" (Songs of Israel) and "Kinor Yeshurun" were all characterized by a forcefulness and simplicity of language. He also translated several of Schiller's poems into Hebrew, among them his "Resignation". In one of his later poems, "Shevet le-gev Kesilim" (Scourge the Fools), Schapiro satirises the literary and religious status of the Jews. Soon thereafter comes the tragic turn in his life: conversion to Christianity.

He abandoned his first wife and married a Christian woman; it was his second wife who really proved to him what a great mistake he had made; for she hated the Jew in him and the society which they frequented reminded him daily that he was a Jew. Often this was done in a manner quite crude. In reality Schapiro had always remained the Jew to his very last. But unfortunately, there was no sympathy for him among Jews. He was never forgiven his mistake.

In his writings he poured out the bitterness of his tragedy, the Jewish as well as the Christian side of it. He was too weak to oppose the current of the times and he paid very dearly for this weak-

ness. In the case of Kalman Abba Schapiro it was Judaism that suffered a loss . . .

The East Side of New York has its own Schapiro: an apostate. This man Schapiro, however, is not a victim of Jewish fanaticism, but — to put it quite crudely, — of bread and butter. For there was a time when “bread and butter” played a great role in the life of “greenhorns” who were jobless and without a trade. In this manner many missionaries supported by old maids in England, have been able to win over a large number of Jewish youths who were thus able to earn an easy livelihood by following Jesus and had no need to work in a shop.

The above-named Schapiro is a graduate of such a mission-house. At the present time he is a very successful publicity agent for Christianity.

He prides himself on the claim that he is the countryman of the Yiddish writer Peretz and that in his youth he had been a friend of the Tzadik (Saint) of Czortkow. At least that's what he claims but you really need not believe it, if you don't want to . . . but once you accept one of his stories he is ready to “dish” out another one. For example, that Jesus is a great god, and that Jews were intolerant; that he is not really an apostate, but a Christian Jew, if you can just follow his line of reasoning . . .

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The reason he hates Jews is exactly because they are intolerant; for if they were more tolerant they would pay greater honors to him and would admit that he was really in the right. But no Jew pays any attention to him. Once he was not well received in a Jewish restaurant; well, not exactly with open arms. So he is angry at the Jewish people and at the Jewish God and if it were only in his power to do so he would show them; but he is powerless, so he is mad; but does anyone really care?

The present writer once asked him how it was that he did not change his name together with his God. "Don't be a fool", he replied, "that's really the trick of it. Gentiles with gentile names are a dime a dozen; but it is quite a rarity and an achievement for a Christian to have a Jewish name, especially such a renowned one as Schapiro."

Of course, he does not have to worry about making ends meet. He writes pamphlets and sermons in which he points out how he came to see the light and why others should follow his example. Naturally, he is quite satisfied with his achievements, for was it not easier to become converted rather than to slave in a tailor shop? Here we have a case where Judaism did not lose but Christianity did not gain either. Well the accounts are balanced now.

V

**A HASSIDIC RABBI, A POSSESSED
WOMAN AND A SCOFFING
SCHAPIRO-ITE**

A HASSIDIC RABBI
A POSSESSED WOMAN
AND A SCOFFING SCHAPIRO-ITE

Who has not heard of the famous fairs of Loshkowitz? It would be strange indeed if you haven't. For which Jew doesn't know about Loshkowitz and the role it has played? Thousands of people, from all walks of life used to come there: dry-goods merchants, grain dealers, watchmakers and "cheder" (parochial school) teachers, and Jews in general who had anything at all to sell, from a cow to an "egg beigel". All came to the big fair. Hopes and aspirations cherished through an entire year were here fulfilled within all of eight days. And the sick, too, were not neglected. For every invalid knew that once he came to Loshkowitz he would return back home with some sort of a cure, with the Lord's help . . . !

Who, then can deny the importance of Loshkowitz! And there really is no need for us to discuss its extent, for a town does not necessarily have to be a large one, especially when it has no room to expand in. The essential thing is good luck. One fair in Loshkowitz brought in more riches than ten towns together through an entire year. The town is no larger than a molehill and when two carts loaded with firewood come rumbling into the town there is no more room left to turn around. And although the mire there is knee-deep it is of the finest and richest variety. When

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the water carrier hurries by with his buckets through the streets he splashes the whole town. Should you slip and accidentally fall into this mud-hole you'll have a difficult time getting out of it.

That's how it was in grandfather's days and that's how it still is to this very day. But if you really haven't heard of that town of Loshkowitz, you are obviously also ignorant of the fact that a famous Tzadik (saint) lived there. We must also assume then that you have not heard the story of the scoffer who belonged to the Schapiro clan and of the possessed woman bewitched by a dybbuk (incubus), God save the mark! Well, because of these things the fair of Loshkowitz that year was the strangest of them all. Because of it, all of Galicia was in a veritable turmoil.

There are Jews alive today and some living in the United States who still remember the story as if it happened only yesterday. They were witnesses to that great tragedy which took place in the market-place of Loshkowitz on the Day of Atonement. They can still recall quite vividly the figure of the holy Tzadik standing there dressed in his "kittel" and wrapped in his praying shawl, working hard at exorcising the evil spirit. He was of course no novice at such arduous work for had he not driven out many a "dybbuk" before?

This particular time, however, the incubus was stubborn and tenacious and the Rabbi's powers could not cope with it. Neither kind entreaties nor firmness could persuade it. The spectators were breathless and bewildered, casting glances now at the Rabbi and now at the possessed woman, but the incubus still would not budge. Had the rabbi merely wanted to drive out the "dybbuk", it would have been an easy matter for all he would have to do would be to promise it redemption and all would be well. But the intentions of the Rabbi this time was to drive the incubus into that scoffer and follower of Schapiro! And then . . . well, but why begin with the end of the story? Let us rather begin at the beginning and tell the story in due order and with all the details so as to give it full meaning.

THE RABBI OF CZORTKOW

Eighty years ago Rabbi Isaac Meir Schapiro left the town of Memel in Prussia and settled in the town of Czortkow. He was a very learned man, rich and of a pleasing personality. With the approval of Joseph Saul Nathanson, Rabbi of the city of Lemberg, he was chosen to be the Rabbi of Czortkow. This took place several years before the old Hassidic Rabbi of Czortkow, David Moishe-niu, the son of the Rabbi of Rizhin, settled down in the same town of Czortkow.

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It is not necessary to mention here that the Rabbi (Rebbe) of Czortkow was famous far and wide. Thousands upon thousands of Hassidim from Poland, Russia and other countries went on pilgrimages to visit him at Czortkow. And Czortkow remained the spiritual center of the Hassidic movement up to the First World War.

The Holy Rebbe of Czortkow, Rabbi David Moishe-niu and Rabbi Isaac Meir Schapiro, representing, respectively the embodiment of Hassidism and the opposition to it, could not exist side by side in peace. For they were of opposite elements, with entirely diverse viewpoints and clashing conceptions and personalities. On the one hand, we have a man whom the Hassidim regarded as the incarnation of grandeur; and on the other hand, we have a person with a wide, secular education who at the same time was a staunch opponent of everything the other one stood for.

Naturally, open war was declared between the two camps and this warfare became more heated, violent and embittered from day to day. Accusations of sinful behaviour were levelled at Rabbi Schapiro. The Schapiro-ites (followers of Rabbi Schapiro), in turn poked fun at Reb David Moishe-niu.

Rabbi Schapiro was a progressive and dem-

ocratic man who hated the smug and full-bellied Hassidim, but was friendly to the hard-working artisans. He organized a workers' club which he called "Yad Herutzim" (The Diligent Circle); provided them with books, founded a credit union and introduced them to modern studies. All this caused a terrific upheaval in Czortkow. "We must not allow this outrage", screamed the Hassidim, "The Torah is in danger! We shall not permit a scoffer and a cynic to be a rabbi!" And they really did put a stop to it. Hassidim came together in their "rebbe's" synagogue, wrapped in their praying shawls and white garbs, lit black candles, blew the "shofar" (ram's horn) and excommunicated Rabbi Isaiah Meir. Every one of the followers of Rabbi Schapiro was mercilessly persecuted by the Hassidim. It was not permitted to contract marriages with them or to trade with them and one had to avoid them like the plague. Women threw stones at him when Rabbi Isaiah Meir passed by and men spat out three times as they were wont to do when they saw a cross.

Rabbi Schapiro, on the other hand, did not allow his followers to employ the same tactics against the Hassidim. He would have nothing at all to do with that narrow-minded sect in which benedictions and curses were something you could buy with money . . .

These terrible and endless squabbles undermined the health of Rabbi Schapiro and he died in the year 1887 at the comparatively young age of 58. An only son, a physician, survived him; he had been a great consolation to his father during the latter's lifetime. His son's wife, Sarah, is a well-known Hebrew poetess. Her poem, "Al 'Tal V'al Matar" (No Dew and No Rain . . .), set to music, is sung by Zionists everywhere. Rabbi Schapiro had remained true to his ideals to the very end. He left a deep imprint on the mind of his followers who have kept close together and still cherish the memory and heritage of their great mentor. A number of Schapiro-ites live in New York and have their own associations embracing the name of the Rabbi of Czortkoff.

A SCHAPIRO-ITE VERSUS A "TZADIK"

At the same time that all these quarrels occurred between the Hassidic "rebbe" and the Rabbi of Czortkoff, it happened that a Schapiro-ite by the name of Michael Wallach took proper revenge on another Hassidic "rebbe". That event had its repercussions all over Galicia and because of it the Hassidic movement was in danger of disintegrating.

Several miles from the city of Czortkoff lies the small town of Loshkowitz, famous for its yearly fairs and equally famous for its Hassidic "rebbe",

Rabbi Aaron Leib Heller, renowned for his powers of exorcising evil spirits. Well, a woman possessed was brought on a wagon into the town of Czortkoff. The woman was violent, tore her hair, raved and screamed at the top of her voice. At her beast-like roaring all of Czortkoff came running up to watch in great amazement. When her husband was asked why he had brought her there, he replied that he was heading for Loshkowitz to see Reb Aaron Leib. At this one of the onlookers began to scoff at him and said: "You are a boor and a fool to boot. If you think your "rebbe" can exorcise this "dybbuk" (incubus or evil spirit), then you are really out of your wits." At this bold statement there was a stir in the crowd and everyone immediately knew what kind of a person they were dealing with: a Schapiro-ite. The woman's husband did not let him have the upper hand; he snapped back at him as befit the occasion. Michael Wallach then retorted and made the following proposal: "If your 'rebbe' is able to drive out evil spirits, then he must be able to transfer them to someone else. Then go to your rebbe and tell him that I am ready to open my mouth wide and let him drive into me the "dybbuk" exorcised from that woman possessed."

The turmoil grew even stronger. Imagine, to speak irreverently of a "rebbe"! But Michael

Wallach persisted in his challenge to have the "rebbe" drive the dybbuk into him. Even before the cart with the insane woman had reached Loshkowitz, the Schapiro-ite's challenge was already known to everyone there. The Hassidim, however, were sure that Michael Wallach would not dare propose such a thing to the "rebbe" directly, even should the "rebbe" himself accept the challenge.

It happened in the month of Elul, at the approach of the High Holy days when everyone keeps close to the "rebbe", for greater protection. In these days of divine wrath and reckoning, the "rebbe", too, was in a different mood, for he bore tremendous responsibilities. He knew that it was only because of his piety and the holiness of his forebears that the Jews were still alive today. It was his task to pray to the Heavenly Father to forgive the sins of his Jews. For they were covetous and sinful souls, scurrying about like lost sheep over deserts and untrodden paths, searching about them, sniffing at this and at that; using trickery and deceit, and at times bearing false witness, God save the mark! And all for what? No one took account of it. One was forever occupied with trivial and earthly matters and one forgot that there is a God in Heaven who sees and hears all and who weighs the good against the bad and punishes without mercy. Therefore one must beg

for His forgiveness as one would a kind father: "Look down, Merciful Father, a mass of tired Jews are Thy people of Israel. Their needs are great: they must earn their daily bread and marry off their daughters; pay for their tuition and provide a roof over their heads . . . "

The sexton entered and interrupted the "rebbe's" trend of thought. He related to him the story of the preposterous proposal of that scoffer and Schapiro-ite. He also told the rebbe that the entire countryside was in an uproar about it and waiting to see what the rebbe would do. The "rebbe", R. Aaron Leib, came from a prominent family; he was winsome, tall and handsome, with expressive and fiery eyes. He possessed an extraordinary voice and was very pious and learned. He listened to the proposal made by the Schapiro-ite, stiffened, and began to pace the room, back and forth, rapidly. The sexton stood near the door and waited patiently. Finally the rebbe stopped in the center of the room, took hold of his beard and slowly began to stroke the hair down, with deliberation, until he reached the very last hair, which he twirled for a second between his two fingers slowly, more slowly, till his fingers moved no more . . . Of a sudden he noticed the sexton standing near the door. He beckoned to him with a wink of the eye and whispered something in his ear. The sexton could hardly hear him . . .

THE "REBBE" ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE

It is hard to tell what took place in Czortkoff, Loshkowitz and the other neighboring towns when it became known that the "rebbe" had accepted the Schapiro-ite's challenge and was ready to drive the dybbuk into him. How terrible! Nothing like it had ever happened before! And when the news spread that the rebbe had set the Day of Atonement as the time of carrying out the action on the Schapiro-ite, the Jews shivered with veritable fright, a fear which held them like a vise. In places hundreds of miles from Loshkowitz Hassidim and Reformers began to make preparations for the journey to witness the great test. They wanted to arrive in Loshkowitz in time for the Holy Days so as to be present at the contest of strength. All of Galicia was in a turmoil and boiled over with excitement like a cauldron. Even the Christian inhabitants looked forward impatiently to the big event when the encounter would take place.

Many of the Hassidim doubted that it would happen and were sure that Michael Wallach would back down at the last moment, for he would have to be quite insane to let himself in for such a thing. The other "rebbe" in Galicia and in Russia were greatly displeased with the "rebbe" of Loshkowitz for having accepted the challenge.

It did not befit a Hassidic Rabbi to agree to such a thing. They sent emissaries to him from all over to ask him to withdraw, but it was too late; he would not retract.

The month of "Elul" passed and the New Year's Holy Days arrived. This year everything in the Loshkowitz "klaus" (synagogue) was different; the prayers sounded different, the "rebbe" appeared a different man and the congregation itself was changed, too. His talith (praying shawl) pulled over his head, the "rebbe" stood there motionless; no one knew what was going on under it. The "rebbe" was mum, not a word to anyone. He did not let anyone come near him, not even the closest ones. When "Yom Kippur" eve approached Loshkowitz was crowded with even a greater multitude. It was hoped that Michael Wallach would still back down and would not even make his appearance; that he only wanted to play a prank on the "rebbe".

But even more waggon's were nearing, especially from the direction of Czortkoff and when the carts came nearer the Hassidim were convinced that the Schapiro-ite was not a practical joker. He had arrived together with a gang of the "others".

The candles are already lit. The people had

their pre-fast meal earlier than usual on the eve of the Day of Atonement. Everyone hurries to the synagogue and fear fills the whole town. The autumn day is at an end and from the synagogue rises the dirge-like cry of the prayer, "Tfilah zahah", anguished, soul-crushing and so pitiable that the heart is rent in twain. And just as the congregation reached the recital of the "Kol Nidrei", Michael comes up to the head of the synagogue and confronting the "rebbe" he calls out at the top of his voice, so that everyone can hear him: "Rebbe", I have come to receive the dybbuk; if you can really drive the evil spirit into me, you must do so; but if you cannot you must confess before this congregation that your rabbinical office is a fraud and that you are a swindler."

At this the "rebbe" sheds bitter tears and the entire congregation with him. It seemed that even the walls were shedding tears, as if to bewail the tragedy of foolish mankind.

Night passed and daybreak came again. After the "Shakhrith" (morning prayer) everyone streamed forth to the market place where the action was to take place. It was a fine and cool morning. The Jews stood about there downhearted and in utter dejection; not a word was uttered about the matter; everyone was in great expectation.

In a small clearing in the center of the market place the mad woman could be seen indulging in her crazy antics and gestures; a froth covered the corners of her mouth. She jumped about, cackled and pulled at her dress. What was all that crowd about her? She doesn't understand a thing. She is altogether free from that feeling of oppression which possesses everyone else. Perhaps she even thinks to herself: "What fools, what madmen, what enslaved and unhappy creatures. Why don't they free themselves from these shackles of their own making". Not far off stood Michael Wallach with a few of his company. Two policemen kept the peace.

A dead stillness reigned as in a cemetery. The Jews in their praying shawls stood there like tombstones, without moving, everyone of them thinking of what may happen, what must happen here, soon, in a moment . . . And suddenly . . .

THE "REBBE" ARRIVES

Head downcast, wrapped in the white "kittel" (garb) and praying shawl, the "rebbe" approached this scene. The crowd moved to let him pass. No one dared utter a sound. Having reached the place where the deranged woman and the Schapiro-ite were standing, the "rebbe" turned to Wallach and shouted: "Scoundrel, your end shall

be a horrible one. My illustrious forefathers will come to my aid and I will prove to you the greatness of Almighty God. You will be damned forever and forever. Shame will cover your head, villain, and you will find no mercy in human hearts. Your bones will rot even before your soul leaves your body and you will be lost in Hell forever. If you wish to recant, now is the time."

An outcry of "Shmah Israel" (Hear O Israel) escaped from the petrified crowd as the Rabbi commenced his work. His eyes turned to the insane woman the "rebbe" pronounced these words: "Dybbuk, I command you, leave forthwith the body of Hannah, daughter of Gwendel, and enter the body of you villain, opposite you."

The woman stood there motionless. But the dybbuk in her evidently would not budge. And the Rabbi again held forth: "Dybbuk, if you will not leave the body of Hannah, daughter of Gwendel, of your own free will, then I will expel you with force. You will be lost in labyrinthine deserts forever. Then heed my command and the command of my forefathers and in so doing you shall be redeemed for saving a holy man, the son and the grandson of 'tzadikim'."

The "rebbe" became impatient. "Fly from out of this woman's little finger and take care that

during your exit from the woman and your entrance into yon rascal, opposite you, no human being shall be harmed!" Michael Wallach was still standing there with his mouth wide open; but nothing happened. And now the "rebbe" began to implore the "dybbuk", but without avail. He soon realized that his work was in vain, that God did not wish it. He shed bitter tears and his sighs seemed to split the heavens.

The deranged woman remained insane all her life. The "rebbe" lost his Hassidic following and died alone and forsaken.

VI

THE SCHAPIROS OF OUR TIME

THE SCHAPIROS OF OUR TIME

*F*rom the time of Speyer to the present time, the offspring of the Jewish martyrs of the Middle Ages have everywhere followed the tradition of their forefathers; they have kept to the road indicated to them and only very rarely did any of them swerve from that path. But even those who lost their way, and those who, due to reasons of persecution were forced to become converted in foreign lands, did not stray too far away and kept close to the others. In their veins, too, flowed the red blood of the martyrs of Speyer; their souls remained Jewish even though they were regarded as Christians by their surroundings.

The clan of the Schapiros are devoted Jews, serving their people in their own way. In each one of them there dwells a divine spark, which lives forever and will never become extinct. We shall here note down a few more of these Schapiros, the most prominent ones of our generation.

The first place among these renowned Schapiros of our days must be given to Professor Herman Schapiro, the great thinker, mathematician and founder of the Jewish National Fund. Many of the older Zionists still remember him for some of them met with him at the first World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. They still recall the solemn moment when after a heated discussion

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at the session, he called on the assembly to stand up and to repeat after him the precious oath which filled their hearts with enthusiasm: "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither . . . !"

He honored his oath to the very end of his days. To his very last breath he continued to work for Israel. He was the outstanding light in the Jewish Renaissance Movement. His clearheadedness, depth of soul and nobility of spirit led him on the right path. He was never taken aback by even the most obstinate opposition and was thus able to accomplish his grand idea. His conception of a Jewish National Fund has proven to be a practical idea. In fact, it has been very successful throughout the many years of its existence. It will not cease its activity until that auspicious moment when the entire soil of Israel shall be Jewish.

Professor Schapiro was the most remarkable and original mathematician of all times, and brought that science to the very highest point of development. When this young man, born in a small town in Lithuania, was



PROFESSOR HERMAN SCHAPIRO
FAMOUS MATHEMATICIAN AND
FOUNDER OF THE JEWISH NA-
TIONAL FUND.

called to the chair of mathematics at the Heidelberg University, he received the homage and respect of the entire world of science. He lifted himself up by his own bootstraps and thus made it possible to continue with his studies. He had been extremely poor and was forced to do the hardest kinds of manual labor. But the urge to study was greater than anything else and hard work never deterred him.

Professor Schapiro died in the year 1898 while on a publicity and propaganda tour for the Zionist movement; he thus died in the line of duty. He was assisted in his great work of Jewish enlightenment by his wife Clara, during his own lifetime and after his death. She worked among Jewish women for Zion. Some twelve years ago she left for Israel and has been devoting her time to hospital work and Jewish community kitchens. In 1916 she contracted typhoid fever and succumbed to this disease while at work; just like her great husband, she, too, served to the very last.

One of our true heroes in Israel was Abraham Schapiro. The Arabs have known him under the name of "Sheik Abraham" and have been in great fear of him. Abraham was one of the earliest settlers in Israel. He came there with his father a number of years ago, settling down in Petah Tik-

vah. While still a youth Abraham participated in all the battles against the Arabs. He was the leader of the "Shohanim" (Scouts) which was a very dangerous post. Whenever and wherever Arabs attacked Jewish settlements the latter called upon Abraham Schapiro, and as soon as he appeared on the scene things quietened down. Arabs feared him as though he was an entire brigade. He taught them a lesson on many occasions and forced them to respect the Jews.

Schapiro guarded all important people visiting Israel. Dr. Weitzman always felt secure when Schapiro was close at hand. During the First World War Schapiro was arrested by the Turkish Government and imprisoned, first in Damascus and then in Constantinople. He was treated roughly but Abraham did not falter. He possessed sufficient physical and moral stamina to bear it all. After the war, when he was freed, he returned to Israel, where he continued his work as of old.

If you have visited the Library of Congress in Washington, the largest library in the United States and the second largest in the entire world, and have stepped into its Jewish Division, you have noted its peasant librarian. This Jewish Section of the Library of Congress is frequented not only by Jewish readers but also by Congressmen and Senators eager to gather facts connected

with Jewish topics. The job of the librarian is a difficult one, for he not only has to supply material but also recommend certain books. In addition to a general store of knowledge this also requires tact and understanding. It is fortunate for the Jewish Section of this great Library that it has a man possessing all the qualifications requisite for that position. His name is Israel Schapiro, a highly educated and enlightened person and a graduate of the Yeshivah of Telz as well as of the University of Strasbourg. It may be stated that Schapiro has devoted his entire life to books. There is hardly a book touching on any phase of Jewish culture which is unknown to him, and he himself is the author of several books. He masters a number of languages, has edited several important publications and lives among his books as though among dear and intimate friends.

We must also mention here that it is to his credit that at the present time the Jewish Division of the Library of Congress houses a large number of books written in the Yiddish language. Before he took over this post Yiddish had been sneered at.



ISRAEL SCHAPIRO, LIBRARIAN
OF THE JEWISH DIVISION OF THE
CONGRESSIONAL LIBRARY IN
WASHINGTON, D. C.

An important place in the modern Yiddish literature is held by L. Schapiro. This is not the time or place to indulge in literary criticisms, but we should point out the literary force represented by L. Schapiro and mention here his great work, "The Cross". This is a very strange book, indeed, and can be compared with Ch. Bialik's "Shehitah Stadt" (City of Slaughter). The same motives of pain and indignation stirred these two writers to poetic expression. The pogroms of 1905 filled Schapiro with the sacred fire of wrath and his feelings of revenge found vent in the book "The Cross".

His literary activity began with the writing of his short story "Itzikel Mamzir" (Itzik the Bastard). Later he wrote a series of articles on the Yiddish language controversy but he matured only in his later works, the most important of which were: "Shvoich Hamoschu", (Pour out Thy Wrath), "Der Toiter Stodt" (The Dead City) and "The Cross".

Let us mention here still another Schapiro: the martyred Rabbi of Plotzk. Rabbi Schapiro was the tragic victim of the First World War. In the year 1920 the Poles murdered him in cold blood while he was at prayer, wearing his prayer shawl and phylacteries. The Poles insisted that he was not really praying but actually sending out sig-

nals to the Bolsheviks. Several years after his brutal murder a re-trial was ordered and it was admitted that an error had been committed and he was exonerated.

In the records of the Polish courts-martial we may read that Rabbi Schapiro, the rabbi of Plotzk, had not been a spy in the pay of the Bolsheviks. What they do not record, however, is the fact that brutal Polish bands had murdered an innocent man. Schapiro has been exonerated but it is still up to Poland to clear its good name.



RABBI SCHAPIRO OF PLOTZK, POLAND. THE POLES MURDERED HIM, THEN CLEARED HIS NAME.

Devoted is the word for these Schapiros. The suffering of their forefathers in the Speyer of old have not been in vain. The Jewish people are proud of its Schapiros.

VII

THE GAON OF KOVNO

THE GAON OF KOVNO

*T*he genial Rabbi Abraham Duber Kahane Schapiro (may his name be blessed), passed away in the Kovno ghetto on Adar 12, Teshag (1943).

This gaon (great scholar) of Kovno was known as one of the greatest of gaonim of the past generation. The three volumes of his book "Davar Abraham" (The Words of Abraham) were renowned throughout the world of scholarship. They are used in Yeshivahs to this day. His generous nature held him tied to the Jewish community of Kovno, and he refused to leave that post in times of troubles and misfortune. As he expressed it in his own words: "A captain will not abandon his burning ship. My place is with my Jews in Kovno." Such was the end of the Gaon of Kovno, of his wife and of those members of his family who had chosen to remain with him: victims of the cruel Nazi murderers of Lithuanian Jewry.

With the passing away of the Gaon of Kovno, world Jewry has lost one of its greatest gaonim and leaders of our generation.

The first of these is the "Museum of the American
City," which was organized in 1901 by the City of
Chicago, and is now the largest and best of its
kind in the world. It is a collection of the most
valuable and interesting objects of art and
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VIII

MOSES SCHAPIRO

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MOSES SCHAPIRO

Moses Schapiro, Israeli Minister for Immigration, was born in the year 1900 in the city of Grodno, of a family of rabbis. He studied at the renowned Yeshivahs of Lithuania and Poland as well as in the Yeshivah of R. Simeon Briansker after that Institute had been removed to Grodno. Later he also studied under Rabbiner Hildesheimer at the Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin and at the same time pursued the study of law and jurisprudence at the University of Berlin.

Under the auspices of the "Hapoal Hamizrachi", he became the founder of the movement known as Torah and Work. He has been the Chairman of the "Hapoal Hamizrachi" at the Jewish Agency since 1936, being engaged in immigration and settlement problems.

He has always been rooted in the soil and has always kept away from narrow party line politics and loyalties.

Schapiro has always been active in fostering peaceful relations between the Haganah and the Irgun. In general, his views are moderate and conservative and he has been appreciated as such by the Yishuv.

The confidence which Schapiro has won even with his political opponents may be seen in his

THE SCHAPIROS

appointment to this post of Immigration Minister. He also belonged to the Inner War Council of Four which conducted the defense of Israel.

The history of the Jewish people is a story of a people who have lived through many trials and tribulations, but who have always remained faithful to their religion and their traditions. They have been scattered all over the world, but they have always found a way to survive and to thrive. Their history is a story of resilience and of faith.

The Jewish people have a long and rich history, and their traditions are a source of pride and of strength. They have been a part of the world for many centuries, and they will continue to be a part of the world for many more.

IX

RABBI MEIR SCHAPIRO OF LUBLIN

Rabbi Meir Schapiro of Lublin was a prominent Jewish leader and a scholar. He was born in Lublin, Poland, in 1800. He was a member of the Lubliner Rebbe's court, and he was a leading authority on Jewish law and customs. He was a great teacher and a great leader, and he was loved by his people.

Rabbi Meir Schapiro of Lublin was a great man, and his teachings are still a source of inspiration and of guidance for many Jews today. He was a man of great faith and of great courage, and he was a man who was always ready to stand up for his people. His life was a life of service, and his death was a death of a hero.

RABBI MEIR SCHAPIRO OF LUBLIN

*I*n addition to his greatness in Torah and piety the Gaon Rabbi Meir Shapiro was a person of great wealth. He invested all his property and also travelled in the United States, Canada and other countries to collect funds for the erection of a sumptuous building for the Yeshivah "Chachmei Lublin". When he accomplished this, he was plunged in great debts, in addition to his investment.

He travelled in many countries in Europe and collected funds and sent the money to his beloved disciples who were dear to him as his own life; also for the payment of the debts, to the debtors in Warsaw to whom he had pawned his life and soul. Wherever he arrived, crowds met him, excellent Rabbis and scholars called upon him, youth and boys looked with adoration on him, and everyone contributed pennies as Redemption of the Soul — the soul of Rabbi Meir pawned in Warsaw.

Unfortunately, though the masses came to him the wealthy ones did not. He went to them but found their houses closed. This time the dignitary was out, another time he was asleep. Many of the wealthy said: "Why does he trouble us, we have no need of this Yeshivah, neither we nor our sons will study in it. As it is written, 'the Torah is issued from the sons of poor'." Rabbi Meir would

have been crushed under the burden if not for the few, "one in a city and two in a tribe" who came to his help with heart and soul.



GAON RABBI MEIR SCHAPIRO,
FOUNDER OF THE YESHIVAH OF
LUBLIN

Rabbi Meir took his pen and wrote a letter as follows: "I ask you, my dear brethren, Rabbis and leaders of Israel, where are you? Your brother is crushed under the burden these many years and you behold it and look at it indifferently. Youths all over the country are shaken to the soul from great yearning, but you keep silent. I told you: Do not sin with the boy, therefore behold his blood is required — Come to the help of the Yeshiva, to the help of God's Heroes, you holy people of Israel; if not now, when? Remember that the holy Institution, God's Temple, calls you with a strong voice. Your friend, closing with a heart brimming with longing and love for the Torah and its students, Meir Schapiro Rabbi and Rector of the Yeshivah of Piotrkow and Lublin."

Sometime afterwards a deputation of the Jewish Community of Lodz called on him with an offer

to accept the office of Rabbi in their community. They told him they would pay him 50,000 Zlotys for paying off the Yeshiva's debts, and undertook to pay him 50,000 Zlotys annually for the upkeep of the Yeshivah and its students. (They asked him to do a thing apparently easy but really impossible, to take him from the students in Lublin, to whom he was father and mother). Rabbi Meir sighed, and said:

"I must sell myself twice, once to the Loan Company in Warsaw and the second time to the Jewish Community in Lodz, but I have no alternative after my brethren forsook me and remained as a tree in the desert. The poem of Rabbi Judah Halevy was realized on me: I am in the West — Lodz, and my heart in the East — Lublin, whence the light of the Torah shines." Alas, Rabbi Meir did not live to go to Lodz, for out of intense yearning, he gave up his soul in the prime of his life, a sacrifice on the altar of the Holy Torah.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF GRODZINSK

One of the first things that every Jew who has lived in Grodzinsk must have known is that the Jewish community was not only a religious community but also a social and economic one. The Jews of Grodzinsk were not only pious but also hardworking and successful in their business and professional pursuits. They were known for their honesty and integrity, and their success was a source of pride for the entire community.

Many of the Jews of Grodzinsk were well-known for their scholarship and their knowledge of the Torah. They were not only scholars but also teachers and rabbis. Their knowledge and wisdom were a source of guidance for the entire community. They were also known for their generosity and their willingness to help those in need. Their good deeds were a source of inspiration for the entire community.

X

RABBI ISRAEL SCHAPIRO OF GRODZINSK

It was in the year 1850 that Rabbi Israel Schapiro of Grodzinsk was born. He was a descendant of a long line of rabbis and scholars. From a young age, he showed a deep interest in the study of the Torah and the laws of the Jews. He was a pious and dedicated man, and his knowledge and wisdom were a source of guidance for the entire community.

When the community of Grodzinsk was in need of a rabbi, the elders of the community turned to Rabbi Schapiro. He was chosen as the rabbi of the community, and he served in that capacity for many years. During his tenure, he was known for his fairness and his willingness to listen to the needs of the community. He was a man of great wisdom and great courage, and his leadership was a source of strength for the entire community.

RABBI ISRAEL SCHAPIRO OF GRODZINSK

One of the outstanding and most influential of Rabbinical personalities in the Poland of pre-war days was Rabbi Israel Schapiro of Grodzinsk. He met his untimely death as a hero in the service of the Lord in the concentration camp of Treblinka, Poland, in the month of Elul 5702 (1942).

When Hitler, may his name be erased forever, occupied Poland in 1939, Rabbi Schapiro's Hassidic followers abroad made all efforts to save their beloved rabbi. After much trouble it was made possible to procure for him the necessary papers and to transmit them to the Gestapo.

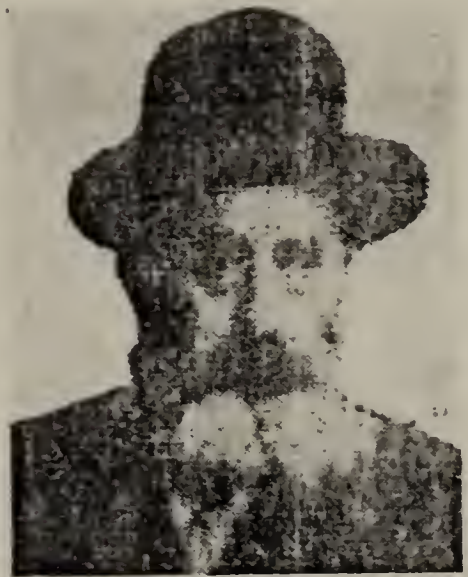
But the Rabbi of Grodzinsk disregarded all these efforts to induce him to leave his brothers in those days of trial and tribulation. On the contrary, Rabbi Schapiro grew to even greater stature as a result of these events. He consoled everyone, encouraged and kept up their morale. His words were like balm on their desperate spirits.

When the terrible day dawned for the Jewry of Warsaw and destruction was at hand; when the first transports were sent off to the death chambers of Treblinka, the Rabbi did not try to hide and thus save himself. Together with tens of thousands of his fellow-Jews he marched off to the death vans with a clear conscience that his martyrdom was ordained.

One of those lucky ones who was able to save himself from the death chambers of Treblinka and who was an eye-witness of the last days of Rabbi Schapiro of Grodzinsk, relates the following dramatic account: When the many thousands of Warsaw Jews were brought into the large square in front of the crematorium of Treblinka, desperate outcries could be heard from all sides: "Rabbi, what shall we do?" His reply was as follows: "Listen, to me brothers and sisters, children of a divine people! It is not our part to doubt the ways of the Lord. If we have been destined to become a sacrifice for the 'Birth pangs of the Messiah' at this stage of the Redemption and to be burned in the flames, then we must rejoice that we have been chosen for this object. As our rabbis and sages of old have said: 'Let the Messiah come and let us rather not be present then'. Their meaning and intention was before one had reached that stage; but we who have already reached that stage, must rejoice that we have been honored and chosen to have our ashes serve as an atonement for the sins of all of Israel. Therefore I say unto you, do not despair, do not wail when you go to the crematorium. Nay, it is with rejoicing and with the song 'I Believe' that you must go forth to your death. And like Rabbi Akibah of old and in his time you must depart this life with the 'Hear O Israel' and the oneness of God on your lips."

After these words were uttered by the holy man, Rabbi Schapiro, the thousands of unfortunate Jews felt much relieved and encouraged and they began to sing "I Believe on the Lord" and "Hear O Israel". In this manner they, together with their rabbi, sanctified the Name of the Lord.

The above testimony was taken down by Rabbi Isaac Halevy Herzog, Chief Rabbi of Israel, from the eye-witness statement of one who miraculously saved himself from the death chambers of Treblinka. Rabbi Herzog recorded it during his travels through the Displaced Persons Camps in the year 5706 (1946). This testimony has also been confirmed by the agent of the Vaad Hatzalah, Rabbi S. P. Wohlgelernter of Chicago.



RABBI ISRAEL SCHAPIRO
OF GRODZINSK



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF



MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF
SUBJECT: [Illegible]

1. [Illegible]

2. [Illegible]

3. [Illegible]

4. [Illegible]

5. [Illegible]

6. [Illegible]

7. [Illegible]

8. [Illegible]

9. [Illegible]

10. [Illegible]

